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C. Rejection of Claims 11 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 11 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maex et al. in view of Chen et al. and further in view of Tao et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,194,128).

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection and its supporting remarks.

As seen from the above, Maex et al. and Chen et al. are deficient with respect to independent claims 1 and 12 at least in that (a) they do not teach or suggest a process in which a layer of C,H-doped silicon oxide is etched using a plasma source gas that comprises nitrogen atoms and fluorine atoms and (b) they do not teach or suggest a process in which a layer of C,H-doped silicon oxide is selectively etched relative to a layer of undoped silicon oxide or F-doped silicon oxide.

Tao et al. does not make up for these deficiencies in Chen et al. and Maex et al. For example, Tao et al. at col. 5, lines 41-46 and col. 6, lines 48-51 teaches the formation of a dielectric layer of $\text{SiO}_{3/2}\text{H}_{1/2}$ low-k dielectrics or of amorphous carbon low-k dielectrics (e.g., FLARE™, discussed above, or PAE-II) by spin coating, rather than the formation of a C,H-doped silicon oxide as claimed.

For at least the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1 and 12 are unobvious over Maex et al. and view of Chen et al., and Tao et al. Claims 11 and 21, which depend directly or indirectly from either claim 1 or claim 12, are also unobvious over Maex et al. in view of Chen et al. and Tao et al. for at least the same reasons.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection of claims 11 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

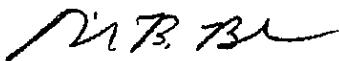
Applicants submit that all pending claims of the present invention are in condition for allowance, early notification of which is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner be of the view that an interview would expedite consideration of this Amendment or of the application at large, request is made that the Examiner telephone the Applicant's attorney at (703) 433-0510 in order that any outstanding issues be resolved.

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The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees due and owing in respect to this amendment to deposit account number 50-1047.

Respectfully submitted,



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I hereby certify that this document and any document referenced herein is being sent to the United States Patent and Trademark office via Facsimile to: 703-872-9310 on Jan. 15, 2004.

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(Signature)